



TRANSPORTATION SAFETY & ADVISORY COMMISSION

CITY OF HARRISONBURG, VIRGINIA

TO: Transportation Safety & Advisory Commission Members, Council members, City Manager Kurt Hodgen

FROM: Brad Reed, Transportation Planner

DATE: January 11, 2010

RE: Transportation Safety & Advisory Commission Summary from January 6, 2010 Meeting

The Transportation Safety & Advisory Commission met on Thursday January 6, 2010 at 9:00AM in City Council Chambers at the Community Development Building, 409 South Main Street.

Members and Advisory Members present included: Bill Blessing (Chair), Brad Reed (Public Works), Thanh Dang (Public Works), Drew Williams (Public Works), Faith Castellano (Public Works), Len Van Wyk (citizen member), Doug Stader (DMV), MPO Greg Deeds (Police member), Sgt. William Keller (Police), Lee Eshelman (JMU), Reggie Smith (Public Transportation)

Citizen Guests Present: None

Citizens are always provided the opportunity to voice their views/concerns about any item before the commission. It is the policy of the Commission to move the agenda item to the beginning of the meeting when citizens attend Commission meetings to avoid detaining citizens for the entire meeting. However, any citizen is welcome to stay for the entire meeting.

Welcome

New Business

1. East Market Street sidewalk project – letter of support request

Ms. Dang presented a Public Works sidewalk project for which grant funding is being pursued through the VDOT Highway Safety Improvement Program. The project includes sidewalk on the South side of East Market Street from Carlton Street to Hawkins Street (connecting with existing

sidewalk to Cantrell Ave), with signalized crosswalks at the Carlton Street and Hawkins St traffic signals. Public Works performed a preliminary pedestrian study at Sheetz and observed 24 pedestrians walking along the nearby streets in a period of a few hours on a 30 degree day. The project would help safely connect neighborhoods and bring pedestrians to two nearby public transportation stops on this vehicle-heavy corridor. Ms. Dang requested that the Commission sign a letter of support for the project that is to be sent along with the grant application packet. The Commission agreed that this would be a beneficial project for the community and signed the letter of support.

2. North End Greenway project presentation

Ms. Dang shared that the Bicycle & Pedestrian Subcommittee has been in discussion regarding a project led by New Community Project (NCP) to create a shared use path along Blacks Run from Washington Street near its intersection with North Main Street to Eastern Mennonite University. The project would closely follow the alignment proposed in the Blacks Run Greenway project 7 years ago. NCP wishes to request funding from City Council and plans to present the project to the Planning Commission and Transportation Safety & Advisory Commission (TSAC) before doing so to garner support. This presentation will take place at the February 9th Planning Commission meeting at 7 PM in the City Council Chambers – 409 South Main Street.

Mr. Blessing asked if this project will help alleviate bicycle and pedestrian pressure on Chicago Avenue. Mr. Williams explained that the path is intended primarily for recreation, but could be a useful alternative travel route. Mr. Smith asked if the path will be given to Parks & Recreation for maintenance once completed. Such an agreement has yet to be discussed.

Additional details regarding this project can be found in the Subcommittee's November meeting summary.

Old Business

3. Sheetz on Vine Street – left turn issue update

Mr. Reed shared the results from the 60-day 'No Left Turn' signage trial to prevent left turns into and out of Sheetz using their unsignalized entrance on Vine Street. Left turns were reduced by 36% with the signs compared to baseline conditions with no turning restrictions. Public Works sent a letter to Sheetz containing this information and recommending moving forward with the installation of temporary delineators to physically restrict left turn movements, while allowing right turns at the entrance. Consideration is being given to a right-in only configuration instead of a right-in and right-out one. Public Works has requested that Sheetz reply no later than January 25th as to their willingness to proceed with the City's recommendation. Mr. Van Wyk asked what percentage would be considered an acceptable decrease in left turns. Mr. Blessing indicated that only a complete elimination of left turn movements would be considered acceptable due to the nature of the safety concerns.

4. JMU transportation recommendations

Mr. Reed shared a letter written by Public Works to JMU detailing the City's recommendations for several transportation-related topics, most of which are safety related and have been agreed upon by this Commission. These recommendations were as follows: the installation of a traffic signal at University Blvd & Carrier Dr at JMU's cost; the reconfiguration of the crosswalk at University Blvd & Driver Dr to the west side of the intersection at the City's cost; an analysis of gating the JMU entrance at Reservoir St & Evelyn Byrd Ave, which the City recommended against for traffic flow reasons; a recommendation to install LED signs at S Main St & Bluestone Dr to indicate the open/closed status of the gate system that will be installed on Bluestone Dr at the start of the fall 2011 semester; the installation of a crosswalks on Neff Ave from the Sunchase development to the Arboretum Trail at the City's cost; a request for right-of-way and help in finding funding sources for improvements to Cantrell Ave, including a northbound right turn lane on S Main St onto Cantrell Ave and an addition lane on Cantrell Ave from S Main St to a point beyond Ott St to accommodate left turn lanes at public street intersections; the traffic signal study at Warsaw Ave & Harrison St, wherein the signal will be placed on flash for a 30-day period starting January 10th to assess the safety and efficiency of the intersection without signalization; the extension of Maplehurst Ave to Harrison St to allow closure of W Fairview Ave at S Main St, thus eliminating the unsafe left turn condition near the S Main St & Port Republic Rd signal; and the removal of the exclusive pedestrian crossing phase at the S Main St & Bluestone Dr traffic signal in conjunction with the gating of Bluestone Dr (the signal would still

include pedestrian crossings in all directions, but pedestrians would cross concurrently with vehicles). Advance walk timings and alteration of the right turn on red restrictions are currently in consideration at this intersection.

This letter was received by JMU on December 28, 2010 and the City is awaiting reply.

5. Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program - Old Town update

Ms. Dang shared that there will be a meeting on January 18th at 6 PM of the neighborhood representative group to prepare a presentation for City Council and discuss next steps in the process. The meeting will be held in the Community Development classroom.

6. Traffic signal removal study (Mason Street & Bruce Street)

Mr. Reed explained that the sight distance issue for vehicles traveling Eastbound on Bruce St trying to see traffic heading Southbound on Mason St has been resolved. Public Works worked with the owner of the parking lot on that corner, Shentel, and the lessee's, Brown & Edwards tax firm (Newman Ave), and they agreed to allow the City to move the six parking blocks along Mason St on the Bruce St corner to the West by three feet. Brown & Edwards also agreed to ask their employees with large vehicles to park elsewhere in the lot. The signal will remain on flash through January and be removed from operation in February if there are no further citizen concerns expressed to the City.

7. Sight distance at Old Furnace Rd & Blue Ridge Dr

Mr. Blessing explained that he has informed Public Works that there is still an issue here, but no further change is being made past the initial trimming of the bush by Public Works. This is not a problem now, but will be once the leaves return to the trees.

Other Business/ Announcements

8. Comprehensive Plan update

Ms. Dang announced that there will be a public hearing for the Comprehensive Plan update at the March 8th Planning Commission meeting. It is anticipated that the Plan will be presented to City Council in April. There will also be a public input meeting held by the Planning Commission in February.

9. Emerald Dr mailbox issue

Sgt. Keller shared that the residents on Emerald Dr continue to have trouble with their mailbox arrangement. Mailboxes for the multi-family dwellings on the street are separated from one another and are often blocked by parked vehicles, which has caused problems for the mailman. Ms. Dang explained that the proposed solution was to combine the mailboxes, but there are still two households that do not wish to do so and are preventing the change. The matter is now in the hands of the neighbors and not the City.

10. Invitation of the Fire Department to the Commission

Mr. Williams announced that there was a gas line break on Stone Spring Road on January 5th that was related to work being done on the road project. Such incidents are closely related to transportation safety and it may be beneficial to discuss them in this Commission. Since the Fire Chief acts as incident commander, it is suggested that the Fire Department be invited to participate in the Commission in some capacity. The Commission agreed. City staff will discuss the matter with Fire and report back at the next meeting.

11. I-81 Planning Meeting

Mr. Williams announced that City staff met with VDOT to discuss issues and future improvement proposals for Interstate 81. At this meeting, City staff pushed for safety improvements and interchange upgrades in the Harrisonburg-Rockingham metro area. It is unclear what will come out of the meeting, but staff wishes the Commission to know that I-81 improvement planning is underway again by the state.

12. Right Turn on Red restrictions on S Main St

Mr. Williams shared that the City manager has asked staff to consider limiting the Right Turn on Red restrictions on S Main St by time of day. The restrictions are in place at S Main St & Bluestone Dr, S Main St & Grace St, and Mason St & Cantrell Ave where there are exclusive pedestrian crossings. Such a change would allow vehicles to freely turn right at times when pedestrian traffic is minimal, such as during evening hours. The Commission decided to discuss this issue at its next meeting.

Adjourn